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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000942

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN MALI POLICE BLOTTER AND EVENTS CALENDAR
FOR NOV-DEC 2008

REF: A. BAMAKO 00932
[B.](#) 06 BAMAKO 00591
[C.](#) BAMAKO 00800
[D.](#) BAMAKO 00888
[E.](#) IIR 6 958 0019 09

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary: During a December 14 visit to Gao and Timbuktu, President Amadou Toumani Toure urged Tuareg rebels to return to the negotiating table, announced his intention to travel to Kidal, and revealed that many of those arrested during the Malian military's September 2008 operation against the Ganda-Izo militia group would be released from prison. President Toure's message to Tuareg rebels and Kidal travel plans may be linked to the upcoming meeting in Kidal between Malian officials and Tuareg rebel leaders Iyad ag Ghali and Ibrahim Bahanga (Ref. A). The Embassy also received additional details on the November 2 carjacking of a hunting party of Gulf state Arabs north of Menaka. Meanwhile, according to local media several Malian military officers in Bamako were reportedly arrested for selling military equipment to unknown buyers. End Summary.

ATT to Rebels: Come Down from the Mountains (Again)

2.(U) During a December 14 trip to Gao, President Toure urged Tuareg rebels to come down from the mountains and return to the negotiating table. President Toure traveled to Gao to open the newly paved strip of road leading from Gao to Ansongo to Mali's border with Niger. The road project was financed by the European Union. President Toure's message to Tuareg rebels was nearly identical to the one he issued in May 2006 following rebel attacks on Malian military outposts in Menaka and Kidal (Ref. B). Agence France-Presse quoted President Toure as stating that "we do not want war. May those who do want war go elsewhere." President Toure also announced his intention to travel to Kidal at some point in the near future.

3.(C) President Toure's entreaty to Tuareg rebels and apparent travel plans for Kidal may figure into the Malian government's effort to set the scene, and prepare the Malian public, for an upcoming meeting with Tuareg rebel leaders Iyad ag Ghali and Ibrahim Bahanga in Kidal.

Amnesty for Some Ganda-Izo Members

4.(C) To soothe tensions in the Gao-Ansongo area, particularly among local Songhai and Peuhl communities, President Toure announced the impending release of 17 individuals arrested by the Malian military in September

following an outburst of violence by the previously unknown Ganda-Izo militia. Members of the Ganda-Izo allegedly murdered four Tuaregs near the town of Ansongo, south of Gao, on September 1. Malian forces subsequently arrested an estimated 44 suspected Ganda-Izo militants. Most of these arrests occurred during a September 16 military attack on a Ganda-Izo "base" in the village of Fafa, halfway between Ansongo and the border with Niger (Ref. C). President Toure said anyone suspected of involvement in the September 1 murders would remain in prison. "Those who have killed," said President Toure as quoted by Agence France Press, "will go before the courts." Following the action in Fafa, authorities in Niger arrested and extradited the Ganda-Izo's leader, Amadou Diallo, to Bamako. Diallo remains in prison in Bamako. No charges against Diallo have been filed.

November 2 Carjacking of Qatari Hunting Party

5.(C) On November 2 a party of hunters from either Qatar or the United Arab Emirates was carjacked by unknown bandits north of Menaka in northern Mali. The incident occurred two weeks after the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) lost two Toyota Landcruisers to bandits on the road between Gao and Kidal. The Qatari hunters reportedly lost four 4x4s and perhaps as much as 750,000 euros. Some Tuareg contacts have said that the bandits were linked to Ibrahim Bahanga while others have indicated that the thieves were acting independent of any Tuareg rebel group. On November 12 National Assembly Deputy Ibrahim ag Mohamed Asselah told the Embassy that he had been sitting in the office of Minister of

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Territorial Administration Kafougouna Kone when Minister of Internal Security Sadio Gassama broke in to relate news of the Qatari hunting incident. Asselah played a key role in securing the October 31 release of two Austrian tourists captured by AQIM (Ref. D). Asselah said he, Ministers Kone and Gassama joked that the Qatari hunters got what they deserved since they were presumably hunting illegally and had no intention of investing in the local economy. Several Tuareg contacts reported that the November 2 incident did not prevent the Qatari nationals from continuing with their hunting trip. No contacts who discussed this incident with the Embassy mentioned any suspicion of AQIM involvement.

Military Officers and Black Market Arms Sales

6.(U) On December 11 newspapers in Bamako not always known for their accuracy reported that several "high ranking" military officers were arrested for suspicion of selling military equipment, possibly including heavy weaponry, to unidentified buyers. Sold equipment allegedly included pick-up trucks, spare parts, and perhaps weapons (Ref. E). Arrested officers reportedly were originally detained in Kati, outside of Bamako, before being transferred to a prison in Gao. The Malian Army's Director of Information and Public Relations (DIRPA) is currently investigating the allegations. DIRPA director Idrissa Traore denied reports of illicit weapons sales and downplayed reports of black market vehicle sales. Traore told the Malian press that the vehicle sales in question had simply failed to follow regular administrative procedures.

7.(C) Several Malian contacts have noted that reports of illicit arms sales by members of the Malian military are nothing new, but that these transactions generally involve small arms and munitions sold by lower ranking military officers - as opposed to higher level officers selling heavy equipment.
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